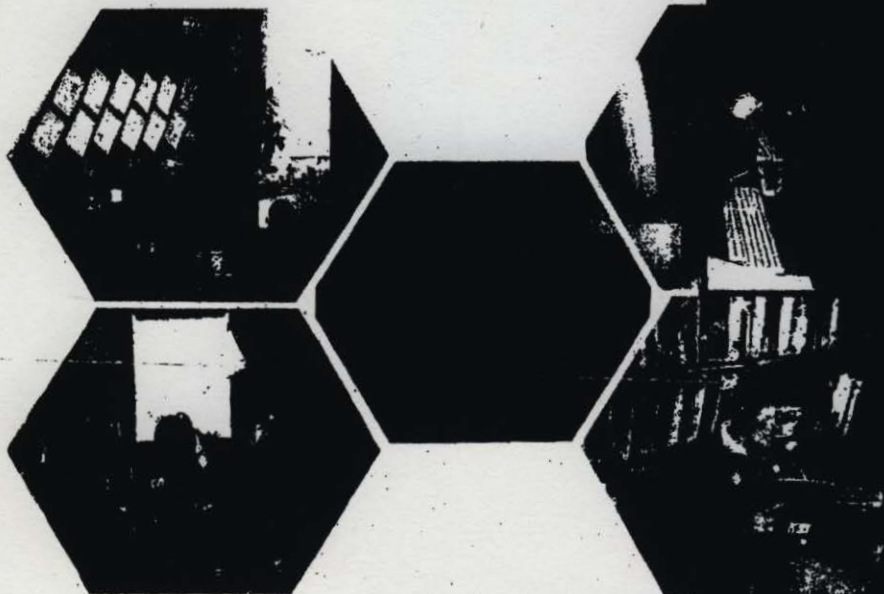


8-028 2000 GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE ~~DEPT FOR~~
EDUCATION & SKILLS (DFES)

Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Gypsy Traveller Pupils



A Guide to Good Practice

department for
education and skills
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

Pupil Support
Equal Opportunities

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Any school, anywhere, may have Gypsy Traveller pupils on roll. Raising the achievement of Gypsy Traveller pupils is the responsibility of everyone within the education system and a significant measure of the effectiveness of policies to combat educational and social exclusion. Ofsted¹ has shown that Gypsy Traveller pupils, mostly either Gypsy/Roma or Travellers of Irish Heritage, have the lowest results of any ethnic minority group and are the groups most at risk in the education system.
- 1.2 This is not a new issue. The Swann report² identified Gypsy Traveller pupils as being strongly affected by many factors influencing the education of children from other minority ethnic groups. Particular mention was made then, as now, of racism and discrimination, myths, stereotyping and the need for more positive links between Gypsy Traveller parents and their children's schools. Evidence is that access is steadily improving³, although there is still a long way to go, especially for those children who are travelling from place to place and for the secondary age group in particular. Attention is now focusing strongly on what can be done, once children are enrolled in school, to sustain their attendance and to continue to raise achievement.
- 1.3 This document, aimed at all school staff, offers advice and practical guidance on action which can help these pupils improve their attendance and achievement

The Gypsy Traveller Communities

- 1.4 A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller: English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (Fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Most of these communities have a long tradition of a travelling lifestyle, although their history and customs vary.
- 1.5 The term Traveller is acceptable to most members of these groups because Gypsy is a term that can be perceived as having negative connotations and is acceptable only to some. This is very much the case with families from Eastern and Central Europe and 'Roma' is very much the universally preferred term. Fairground people, who prefer to be called 'Showmen', Circus people and Bargees have their own traditional occupations and history of planned movement. A large percentage of the total population of the Gypsy Traveller communities, estimated at 350,000, live in housing, though exact figures are not known. Others live on local authority, or privately owned caravan sites or are resident on their own plot of land. Approximately one-fifth of the non-housed Gypsy Traveller population have no secure place to stay, and are moving between unauthorised encampments. Living in housing is *not* seen as an ultimate goal for many families.

¹ Raising the Attainment of Minority Ethnic Pupils, Ofsted 1999

² DfES Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups, Education for All, (The Swann Report) 1985

³ DfEE Annual Reports on Traveller Education Summary 1997/8